

Memphis Business Journal

IN DEPTH: ATTORNEYS
From the December 9, 2005 print edition

Attorneys present arguments on merits, shortfalls of legal advertising

[Christopher Sheffield](#)

To advertise or not to advertise. It's one of the most hotly debated topics among lawyers everywhere, and Memphis is no exception.

Memphis Business Journal asked six lawyers from various sized firms to answer the following question: What is your opinion regarding law firm advertising?

Ben Adams

Baker, Donelson, [Bearman](#), Caldwell & Berkowitz PC

Advertising can serve the useful purpose of informing the buyers of legal services about a firm's capabilities.

Personally, I think that some advertisements go too far and are in very poor taste and therefore detract from professionalism.

But there are solicitation guidelines and rules of professional conduct in place which provide guidelines for legal advertisements.

And assuming a firm's compliance with those guidelines, it's not for me to say what is appropriate for one firm versus another.

Salam David

Siskind Susser PC

I think law firm advertising depends on the culture and the developmental stage of each law firm. If the firm is fairly new on the market and has not established a large clientele, it might need to follow a means of advertising to reach their targeted audience. For older law firms, I don't think they need to use a billboard or a TV ad to generate business. These firms are usually heavily involved in community and professional organizations which will maintain their name. I don't think ads in general have a negative reflection on the legal profession.

Mark Griffiee

Glankler Brown PLLC

A targeted legal ad campaign can be a very effective marketing tool, given that clear objectives are set and careful thought is put into ad content and design. Some of the more successful campaigns define firm capabilities or include client associations and are placed in appropriate publications. For instance, trade or business journals or specific Web directories will produce better results by targeting specific markets or users of legal services.

Carmel A. Morgan

Harris Shelton Hanover Walsh PLLC

My opinion about law firm advertising depends largely on the content of the ad. The type of advertising outlet does not change my view. I do feel that some ads are misleading and/or over-the-top. Such ads may reach people who have a real need for an attorney, but the content of these same ads may create unrealistic expectations and may result in a negative impression of the profession as a whole.

Randy Noel

Butler, Snow, O'Mara, Stevens & Cannada PLLC

Lawyer advertising has largely failed to accomplish its intended purpose of ensuring that those with legal needs are directed to the most able counsel. Perhaps there has been some success in limited circumstances involving routine, low-level legal work, but the vast majority of legal work is more sophisticated, and clients with those needs still obtain counsel, not through billboards or television ads, but through peer recommendations and informal referral networks, which continue to work today to steer people to the best lawyers.

Corey B. Trotz

Nahon Saharovich & Trotz

Today, there is hardly any controversy with regard to legal advertising. Ads serve a useful purpose by informing potential clients about the availability of legal services. Clients are very sophisticated today and usually do not select an attorney based solely on an ad. Instead, they rely on referrals from friends, family and co-workers. I do not believe that any particular legal advertisement can hurt the profession as a whole. Ultimately, every lawyer is judged on the quality of legal services provided.

csheffield@bizjournals.com | 259-1726